



Press Release – June 11, 2021

Secretary Ashlee Titus Speaks before Congress At a Hearing of the Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections

Ashlee N. Titus, who serves as the Secretary and on the Board of Directors of Lawyers Democracy Fund, testified before Congress today in the Committee on House Administration Subcommittee on Elections. The Committee’s hearing, titled “The Potential For Polling Place Quality And Restrictions On Opportunities To Vote To Interfere With Free And Fair Access To The Ballot,” focused on means by which to improve free and fair access to the ballot and how to improve polling place quality and reduce lines for voting.

Ms. Titus began her testimony by emphasizing the degree and source of voters’ lack of confidence in elections and how no matter what reforms lawmakers put in place, voters participation will not increase without a restoration of voter confidence in elections through the enactment of measures that promote election integrity:

As this committee explores the intersection of ballot access and election security, it is vital to keep in mind the current crisis in voter confidence. Recent polls indicate that an astonishing 41% of voters say the November election was not well run, and 39% of people did not have confidence in the 2020 election results.

It is not a lack of ballot access that prevents voters from participating; it is a lack of voter confidence in the voting system. The Knight Foundation found in early 2020 that 38% of non-voters do not believe election results accurately reflect the will of the people.

Voter confidence is the real issue at hand, and the only way to increase confidence is to implement and maintain effective ballot integrity safeguards.

Ms. Titus explained how laws aimed at increasing voter access often fail to increase voter turnout and only risk undermining the entire electoral system they are trying to improve when they are enacted without proper safeguards. The examples Ms. Titus put forth dealt with third party ballot collection, also known as ballot harvesting, and unmonitored absentee ballot drop boxes:

Consider laws allowing for third-party ballot collection, also known as ballot harvesting or ballot trafficking. This is where someone other than the voter, often a paid political operative, collects and returns any number of voters’ mail ballots.



Unscrupulous harvesters can pressure voters to cast their ballot a particular way and in doing so undermine the secrecy of the ballot box, a long-held essential principle of American elections intended to preserve the right to vote one's conscience.

The sad reality is that those at most risk from coercion or disenfranchisement by an unscrupulous ballot harvester are the most vulnerable in our society.

But even if states put meaningful limitations on ballot harvesting to ensure integrity, allowing 24-hour, unmonitored drop boxes to receive voted ballots makes these limitations nothing more than words on paper. Unmonitored drop boxes create de facto unlimited ballot harvesting and present a genuine risk to the security of every voter's ballot deposited in such a box. Drop boxes need extensive physical security protections to prevent voted ballots from being destroyed or lost, and systematic procedures implemented by elections officials to timely and securely retrieve the ballots and deliver them to their office for processing.

Ms. Titus offered a solution to increase voter participation in her conclusion: increase voter confidence by letting states enact election integrity safeguards. She highlighted the need for states to be free to enact laws that best serve the needs of their electorates:

The solution to increasing voter participation is not to force California's constantly changing rules on the entire country; it is to build voter confidence through the enactment of effective election security safeguards and clear procedures established well in advance of an election to allow voters time to understand, and election administrators time to implement.

Each state should be free to enact the appropriate election methods that serve the diverse needs of its electorate, coupling procedures that make voting more accessible with safeguards that protect the integrity of the process...Having a one-size-fits-all approach to elections may have unforeseen consequences, inevitably stifling innovation and tying the hands of states seeking to best serve their electorate.

Giving the federal government more control over state elections would only result in the federal government eliminating the important election safeguards thoughtfully implemented by states across the country that in turn increase voter confidence in election results. Instead of solving the crisis of voter confidence, shifting control from the states to the federal government would only exacerbate it.

[Click Here](#) to watch Ashlee Titus' testimony before Committee.

[Click Here](#) to view Ashlee Titus' written testimony before the Committee.